A Prayer.

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A TRVE RELATION

of two moſt ſtrange and fearefull Accidents, lately happening,

The one at *Chagford* in *Deuonſhire*, by the falling of th Stanary Court-houſe, the 6. day of March laſt.

The other at *Branſon* within a mile of *Burton vpon Trent* in *Staffordſhire*, this preſent yeare 1618.

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BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA·

GODS ANGER AND fearefull Iudgements, ſhewed in *two places of this Land: the one at* Branſon within a mile of *Burton* vpon *Trent*, in *Staffordſhire* in Lent laſt, the other at *Chagford in Deuonſhire this preſent yeare* of our LORD GOD, 1618.

THe anger and terrible countenance of God, of late ſhewed in this Land here amongſt vs, may awaken vs from the faſt ſleepes of ſecurity, and turne vs to the Lord by true repentance. Therefore leaſt his heauy Iudgments in like maner come vpon vs at vnawares, and we be taken ſodainely ſleeping, let vs with the wiſe Virgins in the Goſpell kindle our Lampes, that we may be found ready when our Bridegroome commeth in great glory, to giue euery one as his workes ſhall be.

For we are to acknowledge and conſider, that the Lord hath not ceaſed from time to time, at his good will and pleaſure, to ſend prodigies and wonders in euery age, to forewarne and forearme vs of his Iudgements hanging ouer our heads for ſin: as appeareth by the late examples declared amongſt vs.

In the County of Stafford in the parish of Burton vpon Trent, dwelled of late a free houlder of good lands & meanes,

named Thomas Henworth, as well ſtoꝛed with money and other houſhold goods, as any one of his ranckе and calling in that Countrey. Amongſt which temporall bleſſings, God beſtowed vpon him two ſonnes, but not ſo happy in the elder as in the younger: for the firſt borne, which by ſucceſſion ſhould haue béene his heyre, and poſſeſſor of his lands, was from his mothers wombe borne both deafe and dumb, and withall, ſo ſilly and ſimple, that he had not that ſufficient reaſon of gouernment as the younger had: by which meanes the old man, as it were offended at Gods prouidence diſinherited the elder, and by will gaue his whole meanes to the younger, vpon condition binding him to giue yearely a certaine ſtipend to his dumbe brother.

This condition ſtood at the old mans death as a legaſie, the younger inherited, the elder diſpoſſeſſed: the younger commanded, the elder obeyed: the younger rich, the elder poore.

This was the partiall policie of worldly wiſedome, but God the giuer and beſtower of all good things, hereat much diſpleaſed, gaue but ſmall bleſſings to the poſſeſſor of theſe riches. For this young heyre in the midſt of his ioyes being richly marryed, was viſited with ſickneſſe, and being ſtruck (by the hand of God) euen vnto death, called then to minde the wrongs done to his poore dumbe brother: and therefore fearing a deſerued iuſtice in the world to come, he returned backe ſome part of his brothers right, and by will gaue him one halfe of his lands and goods, and ſhortly after dyed.

Thus the younger brother in the height of his proſperitie taking his laſt leaue of the inconſtant vaine pleaſures and profits of this incertaine world, left his wife ſole Executrix to performe his will & teſtament ordained in behalfe of his wronged brother: but ſhe (as many Executors and Ouerſéers doe) regarding neyther right nor equitie, neglected to performe the will of her deceaſed huſband: and to make her vniuſt dealings the more ſtrong, within ſhort time ſhe married another huſband named Richard Criſpe, a man

as it seems contented to take what he found and perceiuing the dumbe fellow to be destitute of friends, became his owne caruer, and most vniustly kept the dead mans will vnperformed: by which meanes the dumbe fellow was kept in his former pouerty, and forced to relye still vpon the bare allowance of his brother and sister in law, which was almost nothing at all.

These vniust dealings passed on, vntill such time as the eye of heauen looking downe and espying the vnconscionable dealings of this Richard Crispe, and vniust wrongs sustained by the dumbe wretch, became a gentle Judge, and tooke the matter into his owne hands, before whose face goods vnlawfully gotten and detayned, together with their owners, are consumed as stubble in the fire, and scattered abroad as dust in the winde.

So happened it with this Richard Crispes estate: for in January last, hauing his goods and cattle about him in abundance, his garners and barnes well stored with corne, his ricks and stacks of pease and hay furnishing his yards, and little remembring from whence it came, nor from whom it was wrongfully detained, in the midst of this plenty the righteous Judge of Heauen and Earth, before whose All-seeing Eye not onely the words and workes, but the very thoughts and imaginations of all men lie open and naked continually, suffering now no longer the wrongs of this dumbe creature to goe vnreuenged, sent a most fearefull and strange iudgement, for all others, who in like manner make no conscience to leaue the wils of the dead vnperformed, to take example by.

In January last, as I said before, there beganne a most secret and strange fire in the middle of a Pease Ricke or Houell, standing in the yard of this Richard Crispe, consuming the stalks and straw, but leauing the Pease vnburnt: afterward with great violence it flew to a hay stacke, in like manner wasting downe the same with such eager fury, as it was most terrible so see, leauing standing vpright in the middle of the hay, a long pole vnconsumed, also an

Aſh tree growing cloſe by the ſame, which was not ſo much as once ſcorched therewith, after this immediatly the fire flew as it were with burning wings into a corne barne where it kindled very ſtrangely on the top of a beame in the middle bay, conſuming and burning inwardly the timber, and ſtraw of the theake likewiſe, leaving the corne vntouched, as it exceeded all wonder to behold.

Therefore I am here to inſert a likelihood, that it was not the negligence of man, but the angry hand of God, that wrought this fiery example, for whereſoeuer this Criſp went, the fire as it were followed him, and ſeemed to flye from others that ſought to quench it, nine ſeuerall times began it againe to renew, and would not quite bee extinguiſhed, vntill ſuch time as Criſp departed his dwelling and went to remaine with a friend at the other part of the pariſh: in whoſe abſence, the peaſe and corne thus ſtrangely left vnconſumed, was ſifted and gathered together, but good for no vſe, no not ſo much as feeding for hogges, for they would neither eate nor come nere it: yet let vs iudge the beſt and cenſure as mortalls may doe, and conclude that it was onely the will of God, and a caſualty proceeding onely from his diuine prouidence.

But againe to our matter: This Richard Criſpe, within a while after, hauing repaired what the fire had waſted, returned againe to his dwelling houſe, yet nothing at all remembring the poore dumbe fellowes wrongs, which ſate ſtill in the boſome of heauen ſoliciting reuenge, whilſt he both careles and dreadleſſe of any further miſhap enſuing, went with his wife ſafely (as hee thought) to bed, in the middle of night, the fire began to kindle in a cheſe-houſe ouer his bed-chamber, and increaſed ſo ſodainely, and with ſuch raging fiercenes, that it quickly ouer-maſtred mans helpe, and in a very ſhort time conſumed the place ouer which it firſt tooke hold, with other roomes adioyning to the ſame, burning inwardly, leaving the thatch of the houſes vntouched which lay as coueringes ouer the ſame, where not the leaſt part thereof was waſted

with

with the ſmalleſt ſparke: which was as is it ſeemes another iudgement of Gods anger laid vpon this man, if without offence we may ſo ſpeake it.

Yet for all this was his hard heart no whit mollified, but growing ſtill blind in his owne couetous deſires, vntill ſuch time as a third accident affrighted him more then the former two, which hapned ſome month after, and thus it befell: his loſſes being repayred the third time he came to dwell in the ſame houſe againe, where within a day or two after his comming, the fire began as before, to kindle and take hold of a certaine out-houſe, where his empty waines or carts ſtood for ſhelter of foule weather, but ſuch was the raging fury thereof, that it ſodainly grew paſt all helpe of ſauing the ſame, and withall a further Iudgement hapned thereon, for theſe empty waines or carts which before were wont to bee drawne forth by one or two men at the moſt, were at this time growne ſo heauy, that ten or twelue were not ſufficient to doe it, by which meanes they were quite conſumed as they ſtood and burned into aſhes.

Surely this was the worke onely of Gods hande, the third time effected to the great feare of all the beholders, let no man therefore thinke to eſcape vnpuniſhed, nor by any policy free himſelfe from Gods Iuſtice, that thus makes an intended purpoſe, to defeat the helpleſſe innocent, Orphan, or Widdow, or by power and authority goes about to contradict the Teſtament of the dead, for there can be no more ſhame, nor greater iniury to a countreyes gouernment, then in ſo doing; and in ſo doing, the poore are oppreſſed and the rich not bleſſed.

As for example, this vnfortunate man whoſe eſtate being thus much impoueriſhed, is now become (as it is reported) ſorrowfull and repentant, and moſt willing to ſatiſfie to the vttermoſt of his power, all the Legacies giuen and bequeathed by his predeceſſor his wiues former husband, and is moſt willingly contented to performe all dues and rites belonging to the poore dumbe Creature,

whose wrongs no doubt haue entred heauen gates, and procured gods Iustice to stand his best Arbitrator.

Thus by all humane reason can we no otherwise thinke, but that these fore-passed accidents & strange Iudgements of God, are sent vs for examples of punishment, to driue all other from the like wickednes, yet some there bee (I doubt) will giue but small credence, and hardly beleeue the testimony by which they are published: which incredulity and contempt of Gods wrath, proceedeth from our sinnes, our sleeping sinnes, from which our dreaming worldlings might be rouz'd vp if we would but relent at these and such like fearfull menaces, and thus much for the first.

And now for my second, which hapned at Chagford in Deuonshire, where by the fall of the Stannery court house, many good and worshipfull Gentlemen receiued their doomes of hard misfortune, as is verified, which through the cursed imprecation of a periured wretch fell vpon them: therefore with your patience, I will insert some few examples of like feare and mischance, to make the matter it selfe bring with it a truer touch of trembling terror.

AS the name of God it selfe is most glorious, so should we not vse it but with trembling and feare, for the Lord saith he, shall be pronounced guilty that taketh his name in vaine.

As for example, I haue read of two young men, making but a iest of Gods most glorious name, striued whether of them could sweare most terriblest, or curse most horriblest, but their iesting was so odious in Gods sight, that one of them was presently stroken with madnesse, the other with sodaine death.

There was another within these few yeares in the North of England, that deuised new oathes, such as were not common in vse, whereupon the Lord sent a canker, that soone eat out his tongue, euen the very instrument wherewith he blasphemed God, therefore wee find that it

is euill talking with Gods reuerence, for they that vſe it cannot eſcape due punishment.

Diuers other fearefull iudgements againſt this moſt vild ſinne of curſing, ſwearing and forſwearing, are left recorded for examples to vs: as of a certaine Maid, who diſobeying her Mothers commandement, her Mother curſed her ſaying: The Diuell take thee. And the ſame houre the Diuell entred into her and ſhee fell madde.

In like manner there was a man in Friburg in Miſnia, who commanded his ſonne to goe about ſome buſineſſe, but he neglected to go with ſuch ſpeed as his Father commanded him, the Father fell to banning and curſing him with theſe or the like words. Did I bid thee goe in haſt, and ſtandeſt thou ſtill? Now ſtill mayſt thou ſtand I pray God, and neuer mayſt thou ſtirre out of that place! And preſently a heauy iudgement fell vpon the Sonne, ſo that he was not able to goe nor to be drawne away by any ſtrength, but there he abode for three whole yeares.

I haue likewiſe read that for taking Gods name in vaine ſome haue beene blaſted with fire from heauen, ſome ſtricken with lang and ſtrange diſeaſes, ſome poſſeſſed of the Diuell, ſome haue had their mouths as black as coles, and ſome ſuch fiery tongues that they could not cloſe their teeth, which they had ſo often opened to blaſpheme God.

Thus haue you heard the reward of prophane ſwearing, and bitter curſes, whereby Gods holy name is much diſhonoured, and the ſpeaker in danger of damnation, where vnto I will now adde the late accident happning at Chagford in Deuonſhire vpon Friday the 6. of March laſt paſt, vpon which day his highnes Court of Stannerye being holden, the Court ſet, and great aſſemblies of Eſquires and Gentlemen there preſent the Iurors cal'd, ſommond forth and ſworne vpon their oathes, without partialitie to giue vpright verdict: being thus charged, falſhood muſt needs be odious both to God and man, and none but graceleſſe wretches will be ſo impious as to preſent the ſame vnto the ſeat of Iuſtice.

But now marke the effect: There was (as it is reported) an euidence brought in by a fellow, to which the Iury gaue but little trust, the matter for some speciall occasion I leaue concealed, and therefore most fitly to be omitted: but so true it is the euidence giuer brought in, vpon his oath a false accusation, in whose mouth, as it seemd, a forged lye was ready, and there told such an vnlikely tale, that not only the Iury but the whole bench thought it to be most fabulous, and therefore with good admonitions desired him to bee carefull, and to take good heed vpon what grounds hee toke his oath, yet notwithstanding this audacious fellow destitute of all grace and goodnesse, thus tempted the Lords anger, saying, if I sweare amisse, (quoth he) or if I speake wrongfully, let God I beseech him make me a fearfull example to all periur'd wretches, and that this house wherein I stand, may sodainely fall vpon my head, and that the fall thereof may bee seene to bee the iust iudgement of God vpon me: Oh wofull wish! Oh cursed desire! Oh periur'd homicide! Oh vild tempter of Gods anger thus to solicite heauen to black vengeance! For no sooner were these words spoken, but in short time after, the timber and walls of the house (though seeming strong) the weather faire and cleare, without either storme or tempest) sodainely fell downe, where by the fall and ouerthrow of this large timber building, this graceless varlet with diuers others, were sore bruised and beaten to death, and the number of sixteene or seuentene more grieuously hurt and wounded, some in their armes, some in their legges, some on their heads some on their backs, and other parts of their bodies, to the great danger of their liues, and that which is more lamentable to tell, certaine Esquires and Gentlemen of good calling, by the fall of the said walls and timber, were sodainly strooke dead, and their limbes almost beaten in peices, which sodainnesse of death, not onely amazed the whole Towne, but strooke a trembling feare throughout all the neighbouring villages.

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The principall of theſe Gentlemen which thus taſted of this rigorous hard miſfortune, I will here make knowne. As firſt, Maſter Nicholas Eueleigh Eſquire, Steward of the Court, a Gentleman of much vertue, and wel beloued in that Country: alſo his two Clerkes, Iohn Cleake and Richard Beere, for whom is made much moane. Likewiſe one Maſter Richard Cottle Eſquire, and Counſellour of the middle Temple in London. In the manner two Atturneyes of the Law, Maſter Timothy Moule, and Maſter Robert Milford, with ſome certaine others, which felt the heauy burden of Gods Iudgements, and had their bodies euen bruized to pieces, through the inuocation of this wicked wretch thus incenſing Heauens anger, whom GOD forgiue.

Onely, I muſt now ſpeake of a wonderfull thing there happening. In the midſt of this confuſed heape of timber, ſtone and earth, vnder which ſo many lay ſlaughtered, there was a young Childe miraculouſly preſerued, for in the midſt of theſe men of more able ſtrength, which lay bruized and beated to death, as it were with their braines daſhed out, was the ſame Childe found ſafe and ſonne, wherein appeared not ſo much as the ſmalleſt hurt that might be: yet iudge we charitably, God onely knowes the meanes of this Childes preſeruation, and the cauſe of his heauy puniſhment ſhewed vpon the others.

But now to ſtrike terrour into the harts of the Readers, neuer was ſo great woe made in Chagford, for ſo many good men couered ouer with the ruines of earth and ſtone: neuer were ſo many Gentlemen of account, Counſellours of worth, Atturneyes and Clerkes of the Law, thus at one time brought to vnhappy deſtinie. Some lay ſtarke dead cloſed vp in duſt and earth: ſome wounded with bruized and broken bones: ſome crying and calling for helpe: yea, ſuch amazed feare thundred about the whole Towne, that it was marueilous to heare. The neighbouring people came from all the adioyning villages, ſome crying for one friend, ſome for another, fathers for children, children for

their fathers, husbands for wiues, wiues for husbands, brothers for brothers, yea nothing but lamentations, rung peales of woe, and such a confusion of sorrow possessed the people, that it was pittifull to see.

Thus haue you heard how God cast downe his irefull hand in this vnhappy towne, as once hee did at Oxford Sikes, where as in like manner, there was one Rowland Ienks, that for speaking certaine blasphemous speeches against God and his sonne our Sauiour, procured his indignation by rayling of a sodaine stinking dampe amongst them there present, that both the Iudges of the Well and Barom were immediately stifled and strak dead, with many other Knights, Esquires, and Gentlemen of good rancke and calling, not one of the Iury but there dyed immediatly, with many others, to the number of three hundred at the least; beside, the stench thereof bred such an infection in the Country, that in fiue monthes following it was scarce cleared. These, and such like wonders God can doe, and where hee pleaseth to strike with his Iron hand, it bootes not vs weake worldlings to resist, therefore let vs with humble supplications, make our suites vnto God, that he would keepe vs from sodaine death, and that we may haue time of repentance alwaies in readines, and that the vntimely confusion of these here gone before vs, may bee a continuall example, to put vs in minde of Gods anger threatned against vs, so may we be all ready against his most glorious comming.

What great cause haue we that are heere liuing to giue God thankes for thus warning vs by other mens harmes: What louing and gentle admonitions haue we receiued from the Counsell of Christ, that we should not take his name in vaine, yet neither his counsell, the Patriarches, the Prophets, the Euangelists, and Apostles, nor the examples of vengeance, as haue béene héere shewed vnto vs, can worke happy amendment: how much more iustly then may the Lord poure out his hot wrath and heauy displeasure vpon vs, then on any other Nation about vs.

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Theſe forepaſſed Iudgements are heere recorded onely for our inſtruction and ſpeedy amendment, ſhall wee then be careleſſe? ſhall wee then be ſenceleſſe? ſhall wee goe to Law, and forſweare our ſelues for a little worldly pelfe? ſhall wee ſpeake warily for feare of offending man, and not keepe our tongues from offending heauen? Leaue off I ſay, this vile vice of Swearing, it neuer did good to any, giue it ouer in time, deale iuſtly in all things; ſweare not at all, and you ſhall neuer be forſworne, which God grant for his glorious Names ſake.

Amen.

FINIS.